

Western, customers partner to improve energy efficiency in Fort Collins facilities

by Judy Farrell

Don't tell students at Harris Bilingual Elementary School in Fort Collins, Colo., that perfection can't be attained. They know better.

That's because their school received a



Harris Elementary School is the first in the nation to earn a 100-percent rating from the Energy Star program.

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— Peggy Plate***

100 on its energy audit from the Federal Energy Star program. More than 200 schools have been rated by the joint Environmental Protection Agency-Department of Energy program, but Harris Elementary was the first to get a perfect score. Three other schools in the Poudre School

District also earned passing grades of 75 or more.

They didn't do it alone, though. Western and customers Fort Collins Utilities and Platte River Power Authority worked with the school district to assess and improve energy efficiency. Western's energy services program provides technical assistance and information to our customers, and they, in turn, use these resources to help their own customers save energy and money. In the process, they establish long-term relationships.

"The Energy Star Program is part of an ongoing program," said Stuart Reeve, PSD energy manager. "Our partnership with Western, Fort Collins and PRPA goes back

seven or eight years."

"We've provided a lot of information to the Poudre School District over the years," said **Peggy Plate**, RM energy services specialist. "We gave them a small amount of money to improve the operation of the AC system at Poudre High School."

Western is a major information resource not just for the school district but for the city of Fort Collins.

"We assisted in planning the Harmony Library, which was an energy-efficient demonstration project for the community," Plate said. "We also put a small amount of money into the design. That benefits not only the library, but other building projects. The new justice center was recently completed, and its design was influenced by information gained from the library. This is a long relationship built on good information."

The Poudre School District uses the same approach to making schools more efficient. When the district finds technologies and processes that save energy, it uses the knowledge for future projects. The Energy Star review process shows the school district what changes might save energy at other schools.

"That's what Energy Star is all about," said Reeve. "It helps schools benchmark on a national level. If the building doesn't perform well, it tells us where we need to go." More

than 70 energy-efficient projects in the PSD have led to annual savings of more than \$200,000, according to Reeve. That's a substantial amount of extra cash for the district to put back in the classroom.

"I'm glad Western had a hand in helping the schools achieve this great success," said Plate.

(Note: Farrell is the Graphics and Tech Writing Team Lead with RSI at the CSO.) ■

